A Defence *of the* Doctrines *of the* HOLY TRINITY, *and* Incarnation *Placed in their due Light.*

Blasphemous Stuffe of Dr Burns

BODLEIANA BIBLIOTHECA

In Answer to a Letter, *written to the* Clergy *of both Universities.*

THat there is *One is only True God*, is most Frequently and Earnestly inculcated in *the H. Scripture* in both *Testaments*: yet doth the same *Scripture* give the title of *God* to Three distinct *Persons*: and to reconcile such an *Unity* with such a *Trinity*, is the present endeavour of many pens; among which some have been so unhappy, as to produce nothing but a more irreconcileable enmity between themselves.

To avoid the undecencies into which the dispute hath lately transported (especially) Two great Doctors, I choose to follow a greater than them Both; who shunning the *Elenctical* way,) hath cast his sentiments into 28 *Propositions*; and I presume to build on upon his foundation. For it is easier to stop the mouth of an *Adversary*, than to satisfie an *Inquisitive mind*, desirous to see the Truth, not only *Defended*, but positively *Stablished*.

I shall not recite all the 28 *Propositions*, supposing it sufficient to reduce them to this summary, *viz.*

The name of God is used in Scripture, in more sences than one.

Self existence is the first and highest of all Perfections: and in the highest sence belongs to the Father alone.

The other two Persons derive their beings from the first, and therefore are not beings Absolutely Perfect in reference to their manner of Existence.

The Only self existent may derive all other Perfections, but That of self-existence upon other beings; each whereof must have a right to the name of God in a sence next to That which is peculiar to the Father.

If such Beings proceed from the original self-existent by way of Natural and Necessary Emanation, they are Equal in all other Perfections: and it is so far from a Contradiction to say, they are Equally Eternal, that it is a flat Contradiction to say the contrary.

This giveth the second and third Persons their due honor, without robbing the Father of what is due to him as the Original of their Divinity.

To these *Propositions* of this judicious author, I add

1. The *Second and Third Person* proceed from the *first* by way of *Natural and Necessary Emanation:* and when our Church speaketh of *Generation*, & *Proceeding*, she regards not o much *Exactness* of Expression, as the *Capacity* of the Vulgar; who else might take them to be Creatures.

2. *Spiritual Emanations* are analogous to *Corporeal*; yet not subject to all the same laws, They come from their *Originals*, as *Consequents* do from their *Antecedents*, from which they so proceed, as still to remain in them, yet not as Parts of them: E. G. Let the *Antecedent* be This, viz. *God is a being infinitely perfect.* From This *Antecedent* necessarily proceed these *Consequents* viz. *God is infinite in Wisdom*, and *2. God is infinite in Power*, Of these we may more Truely then Properly say, they are *begotten* or *proceed* from the *Antecedent*; yet are they eternally contained in it, nor is the Evidence of the first Diminished, but Confirmed, by the confident belief of the other two: nor (for the same reason) is the honour of the Father lessened by what is paid to either of the other.

3. The *same Being* may have many *Properties*, which do not make it so many several *Beings*, but *One* so much the more *Perfect*, We doubt not but *God* hath many Perfections, whereof we cannot have the least Idea.

4. All that we can know or need to believe concerning *God*, is comprehended in *Three Properties*. 1. *Original Being* is *Father* of All other Beings: This implieth *Goodness*, *Mercy*, *Infinity*, *Eternity*, *All-sufficiency*, *Justice*, &c. 2. A Perfect being must be a *Thinking Mind*, the *Word* is the immediate *Issue* and exact *Image* of the *Mind*, This Implieth *Wisdom*, *Veracity*, *Omniscience*, &c. 3. *Goodness and Wisdom* would be Useless without *Power* to execute; and the H. G. is the doer of *wonderful works*, and the *mover of our Minds*, This is *Power*, *Providence* the *Sanctifier*, *Comforter*, &c.

5. Divine *Properties* are not *Concretes*, which receive their Beings by *Participation* from some *Universal Nature*: but are themselves *That Universal Nature*, from which all *Particulars* receive whatever *Measures* they enjoy. *St. John*, to express the Infinity of *Gods Love*, speaketh in the *Abstract*, *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God*, and *God in Him*: and if we will speak exactly, we must speak of all the rest in the same dialect.

6. *Concretes*, which receive by *Participation*, enjoy only their *Measure*. But the *Universal Nature* is *Immense*; That which is but an *Adjunct* in *Creatures*, is *Essence* in *God*: and every *Property* is *God Himself* under its [illegible] *Idea*.

7. Though the Second and third *Properties* be not equal to the *First* in point of *Independence*, in a *Phyſical* ſence; becauſe they derive their being from him; yet they are ſo, in a *Logical* ſence; becauſe the *First* can no more be without either of *Them*, than either of *Them* can be without the *First*. We therefore do not rob the *Father*, when we adore either of *Them*, becauſe we do not *Separate*, (though we *Abſtract*) them in our Minds. Yea, ſome of the *Chriſtian Fathers* have not thought it neceſſary to be exact, even in *Abſtracting*: for they ſometimes aſcribe to One, ſuch acts as properly belong to Another.

8. The belief of ſuch a *Trinity* is ſafe from Both *Extreams*. On the one ſide, it is out of danger of *Tritheiſm*, and on the other of *Triflein*, But *Three Spirits* ſound ſo like *three Gods*, as to affright a timorous mind. and Three *Modes* or *Internal Relations* make ſuch a *Barren Speculation*, as cannot juſtly pretend to any place in our *Devotion*, or in That *Scripture*, *which is* therefore *given by inſpiration of God, becauſe it is profitable*, &c.

9. If Thoſe Three, which we have ſtiled *Properties*, be capable to advance their ſubſtance to the character of PERSONS, we may ſafely communicate with our *Church*, both in her *Creeds*, becauſe then they will be *Three Perſons and One God*; and in her *Litany* too, becauſe then, the *Second and Third* will not be either ſuch ſlight things in *Themſelves*, or ſo regardleſs of *Us*, as to be unworthy of our adorations.

This therefore muſt needs be worth our enquiry; wherein we may the better hope for ſatisfaction; becauſe it will not be matter of *Diſcourſe*, but *Fact*, which is leſs ſubject to Doubts and Objections.

Plato and his followers ſaw ſo much of the *inviſible things of God by the things which were made*, as to diſcover that there muſt be *One* (and but *One*) *Self-exiſtent being*, which muſt be *Good*, *Wiſe* and *Powerful*. Theſe *Three Properties*, they celebrated under the Common characters of ὑποστάσεις, ἀρχὰς, αἰτία; *Subſiſtence*, *Principles*, *Cauſes*, &c. under their Reſpective ſtiles of 1. ὄν, ἀγαθόν, the *Being*, *the Good* &c. 2. λόγον, *the Word or Reaſon* &c. 3. ψυχήν, the *Soul*.

2. This plain truth they ſo tortured as to multiply Myſteries, Difficult, if not altogether Impoſſible to be underſtood. For they ſtill believed the Unity of God, but ſo diſcourſed of the Three, that they ſeemed to make every one a ſeveral God: Inſomuch, that the Beſt and Wiſeſt of all heathen Princes M. *Aur. Antoninus* ſaid, *I thank God that having ſuch a paſſion for Philoſophy, I did not fall into the hands of any Sophiſt, that I did not amuſe my ſelf in reading their Books, or anſwer the vain Subtilties of their Diſcourſes.*

3. This *Gnoſtick* humour of the *Sophiſts* wrought in all ages: and *Origen* (thank him) plainly diſtinguiſheth the *Goſpel* into *Senſible* and

Intelectual; appropriating the *Former* to *Children*, and the *Later* to *Adult* and *Exalted* understandings. And another age (accounting it no less honourable for the *Gospel*, to exceed the discoveries of *Reason* (even in *Natural Theology*) than for *Themselves* to surmount the capacities of the *Vulgar*) so disguised the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, that as occasions varied, they sometimes Professed, and sometimes Denied it, to be the same with That of *Plato*.

4. The Consequents were Lamentable, *Religion* was degraded from a reformer of *Manners* to a refiner of *Wits*, and filled the *Christian* world with *Debauches and Disputes*.

5. The First most Cruel and most Durable contention was That with *Arius*, which was not ended when the *Catholicks* fell into a controversie between the *Greeks and Latines*, concerning the title of the *Three*. The *Greeks* would call them *Subsistences*: This the *Latines* thought too much, and would not allow them to be more than PERSONS, And *Greg. Naz.* celebrateth it, as one of *Athanasius*'s best performances, that he indulged to both parties the use of their own expressions.

6. The *Greeks* therefore kept possession of their *Platonick* word, *Subsistences*, which being not Classical, needed to be explained. The most *Authentick* paraphrase was That of *Justinian and his Council*, τριὰδα κατὰ τὰς ἰδιότητας, ἤγουν ὑποστάσεις, ἤτοι πρόσωπα. So the *Greeks* never acknowledged the *Trinity* to be more than *Three Properties in the Godhead*.

7. On the other side, what the *Latines* meant by their word PERSON, St. *Aug.* hath given us a full account, not of his *Own private* thoughts, but of the general sence of the *Christian World*. The word PERSON he saith was taken up for want of a better, that might import *Tria quædam*, Three *Somewhats*, of which he could not give a clear Idea. And at the foot of the account we have this memorable *Summum total Æternum, Sapiens, Beatus, hæc tria sunt Trinitas, quæ appellatur Deus*. Thus far we meet no other *Trinity*, but of *Properties in God*.

8. But when *Religion* fell under the empire of the *Schoolmen*, the poor word PERSON was so racked, as to exceed *Both extreams*. When they will talk *Mysteriously* they so discourse, that if I can reconcile their *Trinity of Persons with the Unity of God*, I must be obliged to them for their nice instructions; if I cannot, I must reverence their more exalted apprehensions: Yet when they speak to a learned reader, they debase the word so low, that it shall not signifie so much as a *Porperty*. The truth hereof is (perhaps) all that we can learn in the writings of the two angry Doctors, who with equal confidence vouch the same authority of the Schools; the one for three *Spirits*, the other for three *Modes* and Relations.

9. All

9. All agree in This for the *Definition* of a *Person*, that it is an *Intellectual Substance differing from all others*. By the General, but most Irregular interpretation of This *Definition*, the Later half is utterly idle. For if every *single Substance* already differ from all others by its mere *Existence*; what means the addition of those needless words? It is intolerable in *Definitions*, to have the one half impertinent: but so it must be, if an *Intellectual Substance* and a *Person* be terms *Æquipollent* and *Convertible*, as some contend.

10. *Common practice* supplies this defect. For it tells us that one *Person* differeth from all others, not by his single *Existence*, but by some *proper marks*, peculiar to himself: And since one man may wear many such *Characters*, he may thereby sustein as many *Persons*. Thus the great oracle of language saith of himself. *I who am but One man, sustein Three Persons, mine own, that of an Accuser, and that of a Judge*; and a very late writer of *Animadversions on a Postscript*, &c. makes his entry with such a frump, as intends to Ridicule, but effectually Verifies the Doctrine. *The Doctor* (saith he) *or Dean*, or *Defender* (*no matter which I name, for They Three are One*) Are they so? then what can be answered to these questions? Is not the Doctor a Person? Is not the Dean, a Person? Is not the Defender a Person? If the same Man may be Three Persons, Why may not the same *God*?

11. The angry Doctor, that so frequently complaineth of the *Church of England*, for not engaging in his quarrel; and in every page pleadeth the *Church*, *the Church*, confesseth that his *Hypothesis* appeared first in the eighth or ninth Century: What a misery is it that we have lost so many of that *Churches Doctrines!* The *Mystery of Transubstantiation! the worship of Images!* the *fires of Purgatory* &c.

12. God be blessed, *Our Church* is reformed both from the *Corrupt Doctrines*, and *Cruel Spirit* of the eighth and nineth *Century*. In our present question, either she sits *silent*, or insinuates the same sence which we have heard from St *Augustin*. For in his *First Article*, wherein she stablisheth the *Unity of God and Trinity of Persons*, she nameth the Three comprehensive Attributes, *Goodness*, *Wisdom*, *and Power*.

How this is to be understood, I appeal to the *Church of France*, which in the Sixth Art. of her Confession *de foy*, saith, *This Holy Scripture teacheth us, that in this One and Simple Divine Essence which we have confessed, there are Three Persons; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father the First Cause, Principle and Origin of all things. The Son, his Eternal Word and Wisdom. The Holy Ghost, his Vertue, Power, and Efficacy.*

13. The Holy Scripture, by a *Prosopopæia*, proper to the Time and Place wherein it was writen, representeth the divine *Properties*, as

Speak-

Speaking and Acting in the manner of *Compleat, Intelligent Subſtances.* Concerning the Second Perſon this is plain Fact in the Firſt, eighth, and nineth Chapters of the *Proverbs* of *Solomon*: the Third is no other wiſe a *Perſon*, than the Second; So the *Conſequence* is indifferent to *Both.*

The ſum therefore is This, that as the former Claſſis of *Propoſitions* prove by plain Reaſon, that every Divine Property is God, ſo doth matter of *Fact* prove, that no *Authority, Humane or Divine*, obligeth us to believe more than this, that the *Divine Trinity of Perſons* is only a *Trinity of Properties.*

I envy not thoſe *Eagles*, that can ſoar higher, and ſee more: my ſimple Ambition pretendeth to no more than is neceſſary to reconcile the *Word of God* in *Scripture*, with the *Dictates of Reaſon*; and the peace of my *Conſcience*, with Conformity to the *Church*; which having obtain'd by the help of what I have ſaid, I deſire to communicate as far I can to thoſe that want it: To the *Socinians* eſpecially, of whom I have ſo good an Opinion (Errors excepted) that I ſhould look upon it as a great Bleſſing, if I might help towards their Peace with our Church.

BUT there is another, and greater Obſtacle; and I muſt either leave my work half undone, or ſo repreſent the other *Doctrine* of the *Incarnation*, that Rational and Conſcientious Men may apprehend it lawful to communicate with us, as well in our *Liturgy*, as our *Creed.* I therefore think neceſſary to add ſome Propoſitions concerning that Article alſo.

1. Who-ever believeth J. C. to be his *Saviour*, muſt needs think himſelf obliged to pay him all the honour that he can think conſiſtent with *Scripture* and *Reaſon.*

2. The *Scripture* declareth J. C. to be as much *God*, as is poſſible for a *Man* to be. This appears from many Texts, particularly from the Words of St. *Paul*, who ſaith, that *in him dwelleth all fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*; and from thoſe of our *Saviour* himſelf, who ſaith, *God gave not the ſpirit by meaſure unto him*; which import no leſs, than that *God* gave him as much *Divinity* as poſſibly he could.

3. To determine how much *God Can* do, is more derogatory to his *honour*, than to ſay he *Hath* done more than he really hath done: For the later is only an innocent *Error* in matter of *Fact*; but the other, is a ſawcy confinement of *God's Omnipotence.*

4. It is not impoſſible, or ſo much as difficult, to apprehend, that the *Wiſdom of God* (which implieth his *Purity*) ſhould unite it ſelf to a Man without *Self-Exiſtence and Omnipotency*: and ſo the λόγος may be *incarnate* without the joint Incarnation of the *Father and the H. G.*

5. If we believe not *Chriſt* to be *God Eternal*: yet if we believe him *Deified* in *Time*; whether we compute that Time from his *Conception* in

the Womb of the *Blessed Virgin* (as some) or from his *exaltation to the Right Hand of God* (as others.) This will justifie our *Adoration* of him: and since *Practice* is the only end of *Speculation*, we need not doubt, but our Gracious Redeemer will allow for our innocent failings in the *Later*, when we pay him his due in the *Former*.

6. Though we adore him under the Character of the *Son of David*, yet we thereby intend the Person that is the *Son of God*, and our worship is properly directed to his *Divinity*, since That only can Hear and Grant Prayer.

7. If these Propositions be true, then is there no danger in communicating with our *Church*, both in *Creed* and *Liturgy*; but in departing from her, there is double danger of two great Sins, *viz. Schism and Sacriledge*.

WHat I have thus said, I hope may convince the *Socinians*, that they may more safely *Communicate* with our *Church*, than trouble her *Peace*: and I need not speak of the other comprehensive side of the word to shew how *Two Natures* may make *One* [*Person*] Both because That Notion hath no place in the *Devotions* of our *Church*, and because it is exemplified in a paper very lately published in form of a *Letter* directed to the *Clergy of both Universities*, as to One Person, though the Author cannot imagin they should all meet in a consult: nor doth one of the Universities ever answer the Books which they dislike, but by a *decretum to burn them*. He therefore must write to them, not *Conjunctim*, but *Divisim*: and if so, must not take unkindly if any *One* answer the *Request* (shall I call it or *Challenge*) that is made to *All*.

This I speak because I have lately learned, that some men call it *spitting it in their faces*, if a man write against their opinions.

And Dr S--th *employeth his talent of scolding at me for so doing, and aggravates the crime, as therefore intolerable, because I never had any conversation with him; wherein he hath done himself the honor to profess that he wrote against Dr* Sherlock, *not out of* love *to Truth, but Malice to* him.

He is (*indeed*) *so civil to my* Hypothesis, *as not to give it one hard word; and I shall this way also oppose him: for I shall not meddle with his* Person; *but against his* Hypothesis, *shall put this case, A* Doctor, *a* Prebend *of* W. a Canon *of* C. C. a Rector *of* I. *and one or more* Sine cura's *in* W. *and a* Landed man, *are every one a* Distinct Person; *yet All meet in one* Man: *suppose now it were possible for me to make All these* Personalities *as useless to him, as so many* Modes, *or* Internal Relations; *would not this more justly provoke his rage, than the harmless writing against his Opinion? Yet this is the consequence of his* Hypothesis: *For the notion of a mere* Internal Relation, *deprives* every Person *of his* Honour, *by depriving the* World *of the* Inte-

The Socinians *cannot object to me the same heavy provocation: I have conversed with some of the chief of them (and that, very amicably) whom I believe to be excellent persons, and by what I see in them I judge of the Generality of the Party: This I take to be so far from a Restraint upon me, that it is one of the reasons which induce me to endeavour to make them like my self; and in order thereto, if they be sincere (as I hope) I pray them to practice all their Objections upon their own* Trinity of Humane Persons: *I shall here give them a short Specimen of it, in answer to that Paragraph in the now mentioned Letter, which is the first after the Introduction, and containeth the* Substance *of the whole, that is afterward objected against our* Hypothesis.

In that Entry upon the dispute, (after some lines cast away upon proving the Absurdity *of contending about the meaning of the word* PERSON *by its place in the Creed, which proveth its* Necessity) *the Author proceedeth to say that* Those that pay the highest adoration to a Person have no different Ideas of God and a Divine Person. *To this our* Tally *answereth, that those who honor Dr* Sherlock *most, have an* Idea *of* Will. Sherlock, *different from the* Ideas *of Dr,* Dean, and Defender. *And for a fuller and more formal answer I add, that the* Idea *may be* Adæquate, *and so it will comprehend the whole of him; or* Inadæquate, *and so it may be restrained to any* One *of his Characters: So the* Adæquate Idea of God *comprehendeth* All Divine Perfections; *but by an* Inadæquate Idea, *That Perfection of* God *may be contemplated in any* Divine Property, *which constitutes a* Divine Person.

To frame another Idea of God, (*saith the Letter*) it must be lower, and consequently Blasphemy against God. *No (say I) it is no robbery to the* Dean, *to speak of him as* Doctor, *if we leave him all the dues of his* Deanry: *Nor is it Blasphemy to consider any one of* God's Properties *by way of mere* Abstraction, *while we* Deny *him not the Honour due to him from all the rest.*

In a word (*saith the* Letter) if a Person be God, there can be no real difference or distinction between them, for no Being can be but it self; it is the same with it self, and distinct and different from all other: *Yes, Dr.* Sherlock *may be the same* Individual Man; *though different from himself, with respect to his* Different Characters; *so* God, *&c.*

By this Specimen it appears easie to go through every clause of the Letter that concerns our Hypothesis. *My great fear is, that the* Socinians *Confidence of* Victory *will make them reject all terms of* Accommodation: *Yet will not my labour be quite lost with Him, who accepteth* Sincere, *though* Successless *Endeavours, and hath said,* Blessed are the Peace-makers.

FINIS.